IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1 to 5 (cancelled)

Claim 6. (new): A step-in ski binding for cross-country skis and touring skis having a longitudinal axis comprising:

(a) a base plate having a long axis for mounting on a ski coincident with the longitudinal axis thereof;

(b) a housing that projects vertically upward from said base plate;

(c) said housing being narrower transversely than said base plate thereby defining lateral spaces extending from the edges of the base plate to the housing;

(d) two pressure-spring-loaded retention bolts, each having a central axis, mounted in the housing and, in repose, extending substantially transversely to the long axis of the step-in binding and having shaped ends projecting out of said housing on opposite sides thereof toward the edges of said base plate;

(e) the shaped projecting ends of said pressure spring-loaded retention bolts adapted to engage in openings formed in inner legs of an open bottom, inverted U-shaped portion of a ski boot sole by stepping on the step-in ski binding from above with the U-shaped portion resting on the defined lateral spaces, whereupon said retention bolts will first be forced into the housing, and then forced into the openings of the ski boot when the retention bolts and openings are in alignment, and where after, the retention bolts will be locked in the ski boot openings; and

(f) a releasing mechanism including a slide mounted on said base plate for relative movement thereto coacting with the retention bolts to force them into the housing removed from the openings of the ski boot so that the ski boot can be lifted vertically upwardly off the housing and freed from the ski binding.

Claim 7. (new): A step-in ski binding according to claim 6 wherein the shaped projecting ends of the retention bolts have one of a chamfered, a rounding and an incline formed above their axes.

Claim 8. (new): A ski binding according to claim 6, wherein coupling members couple the retention bolts with the slide such that actuation of the slide moves the slide relative to the base plate forcing the retention bolts into the housing via the coupling members to release a ski boot from the ski binding.

Claim 9. (new): A ski binding according to claim 8, wherein the coupling members are pins that engage with the slide.

Claim 10. (new): A ski binding according to claim 9, wherein the slide defines guides in which the pins are received and guided.

Claim 11. (new): A ski binding according to claim 8, wherein the coupling members are shaped parts that engage correspondingly shaped guides in the slide.

Claim 12. (new): A ski binding according to claim 8, wherein a member defining an inclined surface is mounted on the base plate; and an obliquely upwardly projecting lever, having a hollow for inserting a ski pole therein for actuation, is mounted to the slide, via a hinge; said lever coacting with said member defining an inclined surface for moving the slide relative to the base plate.

Claim 13. (new): A ski binding according to claim 6, wherein, the ski binding has a seal formed by a peripheral rib defined by the base plate received in a corresponding groove defined by the housing.

Claim 14. (new): A ski binding according to claim 8, wherein said retention bolts are each formed from mirror-inverted shaped parts provided with projections serving as said coupling members.

Claim 15. (new): The combination comprising

(a) a step-in ski binding; and

(b) a ski having a longitudinal axis;

(c) said step-in binding comprises

(i) a base plate having a long axis mounted on the ski coincident with the longitudinal axis thereof;

(ii) a housing that projects vertically upward from said base plate;

(iii) said housing being narrower transversely than said base plate thereby defining lateral spaces extending from the edges of the base plate to the housing;

(iv) two pressure spring-loaded retention bolts, each having a central axis, mounted in the housing and, in repose, extending substantially transversely to the long axis of the step-in binding and having shaped ends projecting out of said housing on opposite sides thereof toward the edges of said base plate;

(v) the shaped projecting ends of said pressure spring-loaded retention bolts adapted to engage in openings formed in inner legs of an inverted U-shaped portion of a ski boot sole by stepping on the step-in ski binding from above with the ski boot accommodated on defined lateral spaces, whereupon said retention bolts will first be forced into the housing, and then forced into the openings of the ski boot when the retention bolts and openings are in alignment, and where after, the retention bolts will be locked in the ski boot openings; and

(vi) a releasing mechanism including a slide mounted for relative movement with respect to the base plate coacting with the retention bolts to force them into the housing removed from the openings of the ski boot so that the ski boot can be lifted vertically upwardly off the housing and freed from the ski binding.

Claim 16. (new): A combination according to claim 15 wherein the shaped projecting ends of the retention bolts have one of a chamfered, a rounding and an incline formed above their axes.

Claim 17. (new): A combination according to claim 15, wherein coupling members couple the retention bolts with the slide such that actuation of the slide moves the slide relative to the base plate forcing the retention bolts into the housing via the coupling members to release a ski boot from the ski binding.

Claim 18. (new): A combination according to claim 17, wherein the coupling members are pins that engage with the slide.

Claim 19. (new): A combination according to claim 18, wherein the slide defines guides in which the pins are received and guided.

Claim 20. (new): A combination according to claim 17, wherein the coupling members are shaped parts that engage correspondingly shaped guides in the slide.

Claim 21. (new): A combination according to claim 17, wherein a member defining an inclined surface is mounted on the base plate; and an obliquely upwardly projecting lever, having a hollow for inserting a ski pole therein for actuation, is mounted to the slide, via a hinge; said lever coacting with said member defining an inclined surface for moving the slide relative to the base plate.

Claim 22. (new): A combination according to claim 15, wherein, the ski binding has a seal formed by a peripheral rib defined by the base plate received in a corresponding groove defined by the housing.

Claim 23. (new): A combination according to claim 17, wherein said retention bolts are each formed from mirror-inverted shaped parts provided with projections serving as said coupling members.

Claim 24. (new): The combination of:
a ski boot having a sole with a portion thereof bifurcated forming an open bottom,

inverted U-configuration, and bores defined in the inner legs of the inverted U-configuration ; and

a step-in binding comprising:

(i) a base plate having a long axis for mounting on a ski coincident with its longitudinal axis;

(ii) a housing that projects vertically upward from said base plate;

(iii) said housing being narrower transversely than said base plate thereby defining lateral spaces extending from the edges of the base plate to the housing on which rest the bifurcations of the sole of the ski boot;

(iv) two pressure-spring-loaded retention bolts, each having a central axis, mounted in the housing and, in repose, extending substantially transversely to the long axis of the step-in binding and having shaped ends projecting out of said housing on opposite sides thereof toward the edges of said base plate;

(v) the shaped projecting ends of said pressure spring-loaded retention bolts being locked in said bores formed in the inner legs of said inverted U-shaped portion of the ski boot sole; and

(vi) a releasing mechanism including a slide mounted on said base plate for relative movement coacting with the retention bolts to force them into the housing removed from the bores of the ski boot so that the ski boot can be lifted vertically upwardly off the housing and freed from the ski binding.

Claim 25. (new): The combination according to claim 24, wherein an insert is fixed in the bifurcated inverted U-configuration.

Claim 26. (new): The combination according to claim 24, wherein the bifurcated inverted U-configuration defines inclined surfaces adjacent its bottom for coacting with the retentions bolts during step-in of the ski boot onto the ski binding.